Reviewer’s report

Title: The association between proximity to animal feeding operations and community health: a protocol for a updating a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 14 August 2014

Reviewer: Marc Avey

Reviewer’s report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

2. Minor Essential Revisions
Line 169:
Consider rephrasing “In additional to searching…” to “In addition to searching…”

Line 203:
Consider using author abbreviations that correspond to the ones used on the title page for clarity: AOC = AMOC and JS = JMS.

Line 231:
The reference “[6].” appears to be in bold type font.

Line 294:
Same as line 203.

Line 298:
Same as line 203.

Lines 356 – 366:
Same as line 203.

Line 372:
No title for reference section to separate it from Figure Captions.

Line 391:
An extra period after “(Workshop).”

3. Discretionary Revisions
Utilizing the risk of bias tool (pilot version) for non-randomized studies for observational studies is itself of great interest. The authors may consider explaining in more detail why these guidelines are likely to be applicable to questions of bias in studies in etiology (lines 231 -233).
Will the review assess the risk of bias for all outcomes from the previous review as well as outcomes from new review (I found it unclear)?

The authors limit eligible study designs to those on human subjects (line 94), and systematically remove non-human animal studies in their search strategy (lines 147 – 148). Although there may be valid practical and technical reasons to limit the included studies to human subjects, no rationale is given for excluding non-human animal studies. In addition, since the review question relates to the etiology of disease rather than the assessment of an intervention (line 323); the inclusion of animal studies, or a separate review of animal studies, would seem to be of some value (e.g. animal studies may be hypothesis generating). The authors may consider justifying the exclusion non-human animal studies.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'